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CONVERSIONS APPROXIMATE

FINE AUCTION

Champagnes with Exemplary Provenance

TEXT: Tim Triptree, MASTER OF WINE

In my role at Christie's, I get to deal with many of the world's finest wines, from Burgundy and Bordeaux to Cult California to Australian Icons to vintage Port and Madeira. But the region that holds a special place in my heart is Champagne. I have had incredible visits to this region at different times of the year to understand the various stages of the *methode champenoise*. These visits have cemented my love for Champagne.



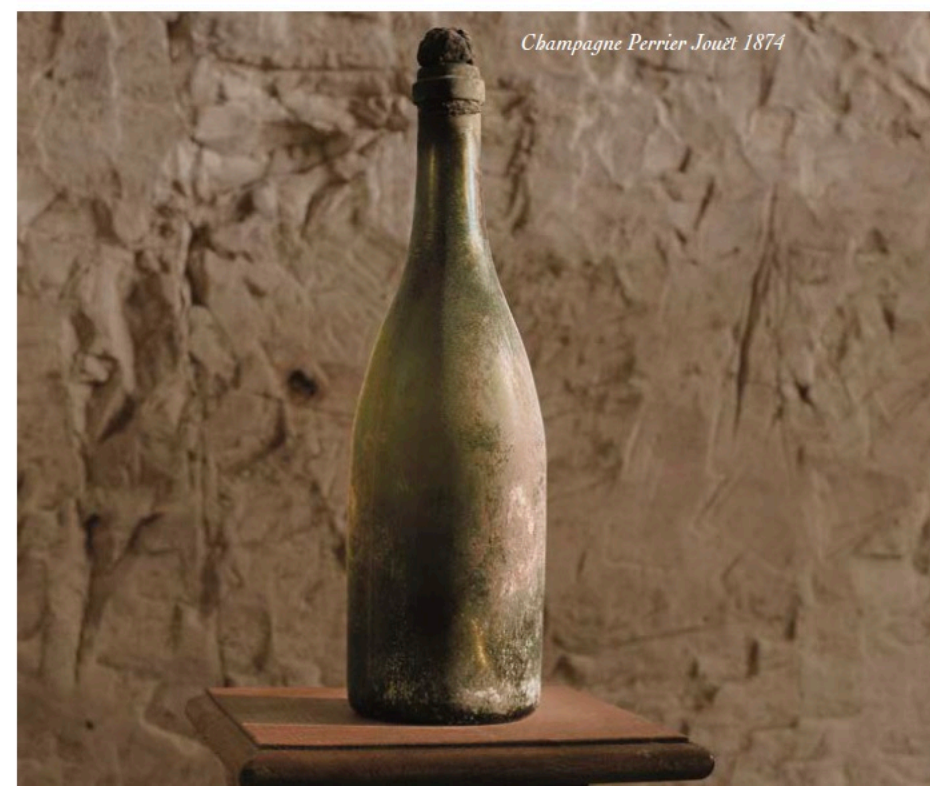
Maison Belle Epoque

At Christie's, I am fortunate to be involved with exceptional sales direct from the Champagne Houses. These sales have been highly successful largely due to the exemplary provenance of the bottles that are drawn directly from their cellars. Collectors are keen to acquire these vinous gems as opportunities like this do not come around very often. This creates a buzz around the auction and the high demand results in competitive bidding that can lead to unprecedented winning bids.

A notable highlight was in December 2021 when Christie's sold a collection direct from the cellars of Perrier-Jouet that included an extremely rare bottle of their vintage 1874, which had a special connection for Christie's. Previously sold in 1888 at Christie's London, this bottle set the longstanding benchmark for the most expensive Champagne ever sold at auction from 1888 right up until 1967. 1874 was an outstanding vintage, which created huge interest in the wines from Champagne during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This rare bottle sold for over £42,000 against an estimate of £10,000 to £15,000, far exceeding expectations.

Other notable auctions and another highlight of my Christie's career were the London and New York auctions

in December 2017, of rarities direct from the cellars of Champagne Charles Heidsieck, which represented the launch of the *Collection Crayères* from Charles Heidsieck. This auction also exceeded expectations with exceptional prices particularly for the 1979, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1985 vintages of their Prestige Cuvée, Champagne Charlie and the rarely seen Charles Heidsieck Cuvée Royale 1966, 1975 and 1981.



Champagne Perrier Jouët 1874

As vintage Champagnes become increasingly popular with wine aficionados, their market has shown impressive growth in recent years. A major reason is the age ability of these vintage expressions, which the 1874 demonstrates. The lucky buyer of the Perrier-Jouët 1874 tasted this in the Maison Belle Epoque on Avenue de Champagne in Epernay and reports were that it was sublime.

Champagne is now considered a fine wine that can age and evolve, and not just the vintage expressions. Christie's has seen impressive prices for matured Krug Grand Cuvée produced before the introduction of Krug ID and Editions, as Champagne connoisseurs compete to acquire these complex and richly evolved mature expressions of Champagne.

Prices for top Champagnes showed impressive growth from mid-2020 until 2023. Most recently, there has been a slight softening in the prices, also reflected in other fine wine regions, which is creating buying opportunities for collectors.

In April 2023, I visited Champagne Lanson for an exceptional tasting of older vintages with Cellar Master Herve Dantan. During the Covid lockdowns when visitors were not allowed, Herve started a project to preserve the heritage of



Lanson by reconditioning their library collection of older vintages and creating new Lanson Collection releases. We tasted the Lanson vintages 1949, 1964, 1971 and 1975, which were in the distinctive 'Le Quille' sloping shouldered-shaped bottles. They were all superb and demonstrated how well Champagne can age when stored correctly, developing multi-layered complexity while retaining the refreshing, crisp, vibrant acidity that it is famous for. The 1949 had been



Collection Crayères



Photo: Christie's Images Limited 2023

opened one week before I tasted and was holding up very well, with an intense toffee nose with mocha and truffle, mouth-watering citric flavours with pineapple and mango – altogether a superb Champagne.

The Lanson 1964, that had been disgorged in 2019 with a pressure of 1.28 and three grams per litre dosage, had an explosive nose with intense dried orange peel, honey, saffron and subtle vanilla pod nuances. Creamy textured mouthfeel and mouth-watering acidity with a long saline citric, pineapple and ripe apple finish. Perfectly judged dosage and another superb Champagne.

The Lanson from the 1971 vintage was disgorged on 7 June 2022 with a slightly higher pressure of 1.72 and again dosage of three grams per litre. It had a complex nose with mushroom and toast and coffee grounds, over nuances of brioche and a fully-matured nutty caramel character. Full bodied with delicate fine mousse and vibrant acidity, citrus and red fruit flavours with a long lingering finish, and opened up further with time in glass to reveal rich apricot and honey nuances – delicious!

Finally, there was the Lanson 1975 that had been disgorged on 28 June 2022 with the same dosage of three grams per litre and pressure of 1.06. A blend of 52% Pinot and 48% Chardonnay from Avize, Cramant, Oger & Chouilly. Explosive aromatics of rich honey and toasted brioche with dried apricots, pineapple, ginger and mango and subtle nuances of truffle and mocha – very complex and refined and with time in glass it developed more of the mocha and

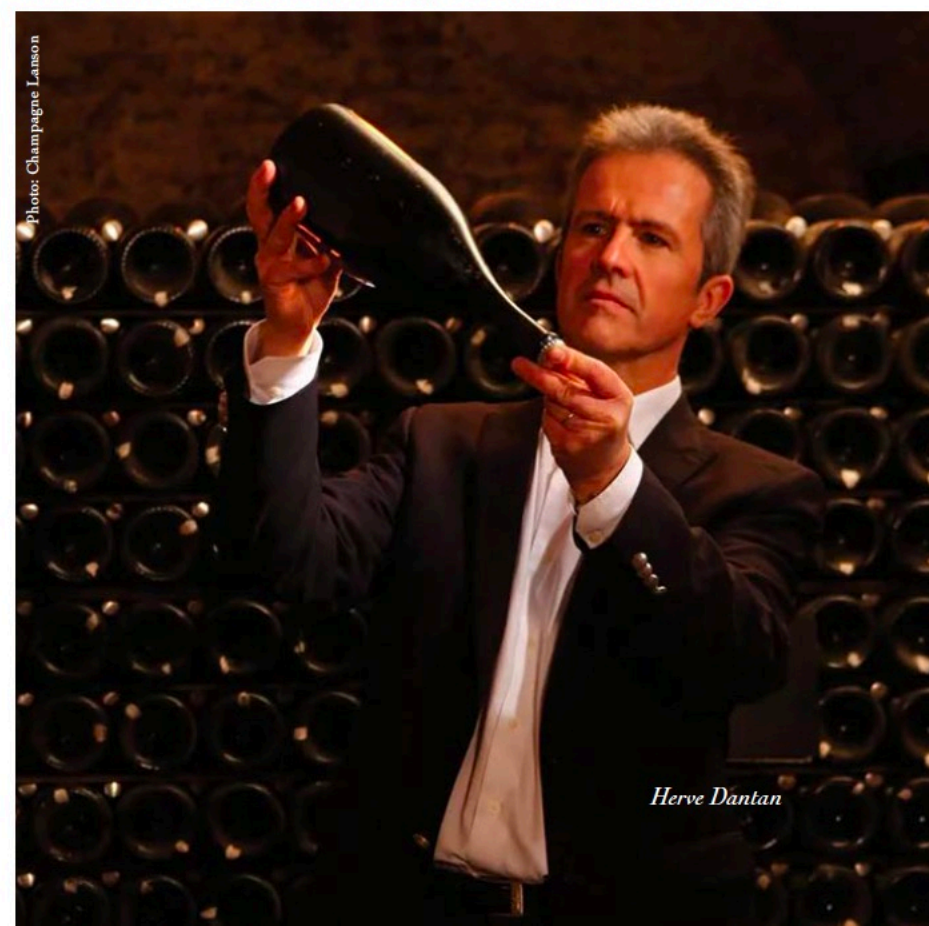


Photo: Champagne Lanson

Herve Dantan

*Paradis
Lanson*

Photo: Rajiv Singhal

coffee and even liquorice and toasted hazelnuts. Delicate fine mousse with vibrant acidity and intense citrus flavours. Linear and long with a great silky texture and a pleasant bitter Seville orange on the finish. Excellent.

At the Finest & Rarest Wines & Spirits auction held in London on 30 November, Christie's are delighted to offer these exceptional Lanson vintages of 1964, 1971 & 1975 in both bottles and magnums, released specifically for this auction from the Lanson cellars. Also included in the auction is a single bottle of the Lanson 1921, the lucky buyer of which will get a special VIP visit to the Lanson cellars in Reims to taste this piece of their vinous history. If you would like to acquire these incredibly rare Lanson Champagnes, make sure you keep an eye on Christie's website to register for upcoming Wine & Spirit auctions and put your paddle up. 🍾



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